PSYCH-GA.3404:001 Moral Psychology  
SPRING 2016 | Friday 2-4pm | Meyer 465

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Office Hours: By appointment  
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Course Website: available on NYU Classes (via your NYU Home account)

Readings: You are responsible for the assigned readings each week (not the additional readings). Most of them will be available on NYU class (in the resources folder) or online.

Additional Reading:

Course Description

Philosophers and scientists have long been captivated by the human capacity for moral and ethical decision-making. This course will review theory and research on moral psychology, with a focus on the underlying mental processes that guide moral judgments and decision-making. We will draw on research in social, cognitive and developmental psychology, as well as social and affective neuroscience and philosophy.

This course will provide an overview of the major theoretical debates and empirical developments in the area of moral psychology. Students in this class will be directly exposed to many of the core ideas in the field by reading classic and contemporary articles. The readings will provide an in-depth exploration of key empirical and theoretical developments.
Course format and grades

Class assignments are designed to develop your ability to think critically and creatively, moderate discussion, present ideas and write—fundamental skills for your research career. Your assignments should be theory-driven, clear, and concise.

Participation (10%): Each student is expected to read the assigned articles each week and participate in discussion of those readings during the class meeting. Students are graded on their ability to understand and integrate the material. I am especially interested in your ability to add to the dialogue, either by challenging your peers or building on a discussion. Although I am looking for your critical perspectives on the course material, I am equally interested in your ability to understand the historical and contemporary value in the literature. You will also be graded on your ability to help your classmates by providing useful suggestions during their presentations.

Leading discussion (10%): One student will be assigned to lead discussion each week. Discussion leaders will be responsible for facilitating discussion of the assigned readings. Discussion leaders will prepare and distribute a list of ~10 questions and talking points design to provoke discussion to the class at least 24 hours before the class meeting (send them out as an announcement via NYU Classes). The questions can focus on articles or themes that connect the articles. Discussion assignments will be determined during the first class.

Hypothesis generation (20%): Each student will complete McGuire’s creative hypothesis generation steps and develop five potential term paper ideas for my consideration (due March 25th). Each idea should be described succinctly (< 200 words with spaces—please provide word count). I will provide feedback on the ideas and tell you if any (or all) are approved for your presentation and term paper. All ideas for presentation/term paper must be approved.

Presentation (20%): Each student will briefly present a theory or research proposal (15-20 minutes) on the last week of class (May 6th). This will provide you with an opportunity to share your ideas with the class and receive critical feedback before you submit your term paper. Standard presentation format involves Keynote/PowerPoint, but you are free to use any format necessary to communicate your proposal. You will be graded on your ability to clearly and elegantly communicate the main points of the theory or research proposal.

Term paper (40%): Each student will write an original theoretical or research proposal in a particular area of intergroup relations research due on the last day of exams at NYU (Due May 16th). The paper must be less than 5000 words (including title page, figures, footnotes, references, etc.—please provide word count). The paper will be a review of some specific topic or research issue, grounded in one of the topics and/or references in the course. Following a conceptual review of previous research on the selected topic, the paper will either (a) present a proposal for future research addressing some specific question arising from the literature review (specifying the
research question and purpose of the study, followed by design and general method), or (b) present a novel theoretical proposal. Paper formatting should follow APA guidelines (e.g., papers must be typed in a double-spaced format, have one-inch margins, etc). The paper is an opportunity to study a topic of interest in depth and go beyond the course material. Papers must be submitted by email (jay.vanbavel@nyu.edu). Late papers will be deducted 5% for every day they are late. Please contact me at least a week before the due date if you require an extension.

Social media bonus marks (up to 4%): This is your one-and-only opportunity to bolster your grade. I will not let you complete an “extra assignment” or let you turn in a “revision” of your term paper if you did a bad job. If you are worried about your mark, please complete any or all of these activities. You should email a copy of your bonus assignments by midnight on the due date to ensure you receive credit (Due May 9th).

Wikipedia (1%): Compose (or substantively edit) a wiki entry directly related to the course. Email me a screen capture of the entry before and after your edits.

Twitter (1%): Compose and post one tweet about a published article related to the content we have covered in class. Your tweet must communicate the core point of the paper, provide a link to the paper, and include the hashtag #MoralPsychClass

Blog (2%): Compose and email me a blog post based on the one of the articles you read in class (ideally, you would connect it to contemporary issue). You get one point for doing a decent job, two points for doing a great job (i.e., something that I would actually post on a class blog).

**GRADING SCHEME**

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<td>Leading Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hypothesis Generation</td>
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<td>Presentation</td>
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<td>Term paper</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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A  93-100  
A-  90-92  
B+  87-89  
B   83-86  
B-  80-82  
C+  77-79  
C   73-76  
C-  70-72  
D+  67-69  
D   60-66  
D-  59-63  
F   <59

If you have questions or concerns about your grades you should meet with me after class to discuss them. I am happy to meet with you to discuss your exam and why you received any grade. To have your assignment re-graded you need to submit a brief
one-page typed description of your concerns and why you deserve a better mark. I will re-grade the entire assignment and your grade on any part can go up or down.

**Topic and Assignment Schedule**

**February 5: The sacred domain**


Additional reading:


**February 12: Moralization**


Additional reading:


**February 19: The role of affect on moral cognition - The Intuitionists**


Additional reading:


**February 26: Dual process models of morality**


Additional reading:


March 4: Specific emotions


Additional reading:


March 11: Mind Perception and morality


Additional reading:

Psychological Inquiry special issue on The Moral Dyad


**March 18: SPRING BREAK - No class**

**March 25: Moral motives**


Additional reading:


**April 1: Moral Politics (JAY IS OUT OF THE COUNTRY)**


**Additional reading:**


**April 8: Moral mindsets**


Additional Reading:


**April 15: Moral Perception**


Additional Reading:


**April 22: Moral Neuroscience**


Additional Reading:


April 29: SANS - No class

May 6: Research Presentations ***PLAN TO STAY FROM 2-6PM***

**Course website**

Log in and you should see this course. If you don’t, please let me know. Readings, grades, assignments and handouts will be posted online. There is also a discussion board for questions. If you have a question you can email me, or post it online. If several people email me a similar question I will post it on the website. Please treat the website as a collective resource to ask questions of common interest and share ideas with one another. If you have a dispute or concern with another member of the class, please email me directly and do not try to deal with it on the course website.

**Academic Conduct**

All work must be your own. Cheating or plagiarism will be reported through official university channels, and the consequences will be severe. If you are unwise enough to plagiarize, the minimum punishment is usually failure in the course. If the case of plagiarism or cheating is especially blatant, you may be expelled from the university. The papers and assignments are designed for what you can do based on what we are covering in this class and the skills you have already learned.